

California Department of Veterans Affairs



CAL-VET LOANS – VETERANS HOMES – VETERANS SERVICES – WOMEN VETERANS
VETERANS CEMETERIES AND MEMORIALS – VETS LICENSE PLATES

NEWS RELEASE

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SENATE CONFIRMS JOHANNESSEN AS SECRETARY OF CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SACRAMENTO, CA. – March 24, 2003 – Today, Secretary K. Maurice Johannessen, was officially confirmed by the California State Senate as the new Secretary of the California Department of Veterans Affairs by a vote of 25 to 10.

“I greatly appreciate the confidence expressed in me by my former colleagues of the California State Senate,” commented Secretary Johannessen. “During this time of concern for our military men and women overseas, today’s vote of approval to head the state Department of Veterans Affairs can be a reassurance to all our veterans that California is concerned for them and will work to provide for those here and those who will be returning from overseas.”

During today’s senate session, veterans gathered in the senate gallery and on the senate floor to show their support for Secretary Johannessen. A number of Senators also spoke in support of his confirmation citing his knowledge of veteran’s issues and ability to make the hard decisions to improve the Department.

Governor Gray Davis commented, “I am grateful to Senator John Burton and the California Senate for its vote of confidence in Secretary Maurice Johannessen. As a fellow veteran, Maurice understands the urgent need to give those who served the treatment they deserve.”

Last week, during the Senate Rules Committee hearing, a tremendous outpouring of support was demonstrated by veterans from across the state. Over one hundred veterans filled the hearing room in support for Secretary Johannessen. Two dozen of those individuals, representing most veteran’s organizations in California rose to speak on his behalf. Over thirty residents from the Yountville Veterans Home made the hour and a half journey to the Capitol by bus to display the Home’s unanimous backing for his confirmation.

Today’s Senate confirmation of a Secretary for the Department of Veterans Affairs is the first such confirmation for the Department. When the Department became a freestanding agency in 1996, Jay Vargas did hold the title of Secretary but was actually confirmed as a Director, later being elevated to Secretary by statute. Johannessen becomes the first candidate to be confirmed as Secretary by the Senate.

Governor Davis appointed Johannessen as Secretary on December 17, 2002. The Governor chose Johannessen because of his knowledge of veteran’s issues, having been Chairman of the Senate Veterans Affairs Committee for six years, and the outstanding support expressed by veterans groups for Johannessen.

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